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THE ARRIVAL #5

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"EVERYTHING MUST GO"

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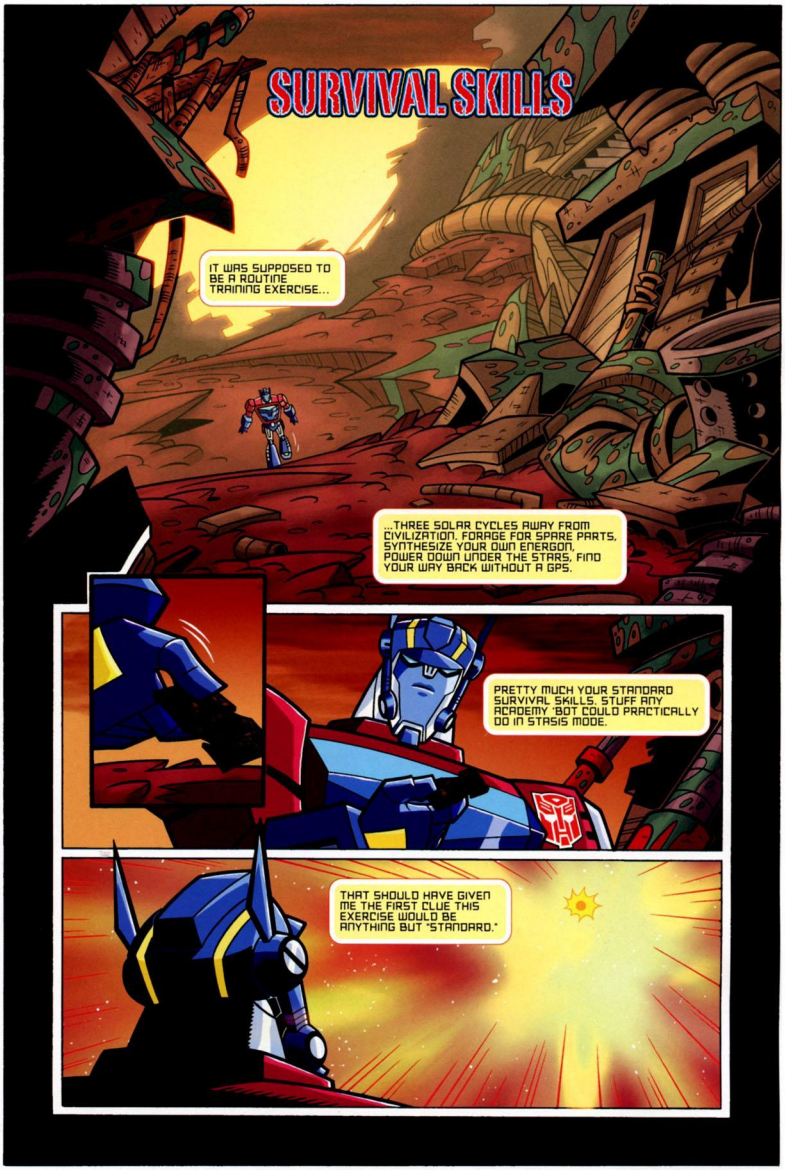

SURVIVAL SKILLS
IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A ROUTINE TRAINING EXERCISE...
...THREE SOLAR CYCLES AWAY FROM CIVILIZATION. FORAGE FOR SPARE PARTS, SYNTHESIZE YOUR OWN ENERGON, POWER DOWN UNDER THE STARS, FIND YOUR WAY BACK WITHOUT A GPS.
PRETTY MUCH YOUR STANDARD SURVIVAL SKILLS. STUFF ANY ACADEMY 'BOT COULD PRACTICALLY DO IN STASIS MODE.
THAT SHOULD HAVE GIVEN ME THE FIRST CLUE THIS EXERCISE WOULD BE ANYTHING BUT "STANDARD."

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS UP WHEN MY RESCUE SHIP SHOWED UP SIX MEGACYCLES EARLY.
THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED THIS ISN'T A RESCUE SHIP...
...IT'S A DECEPTICON!

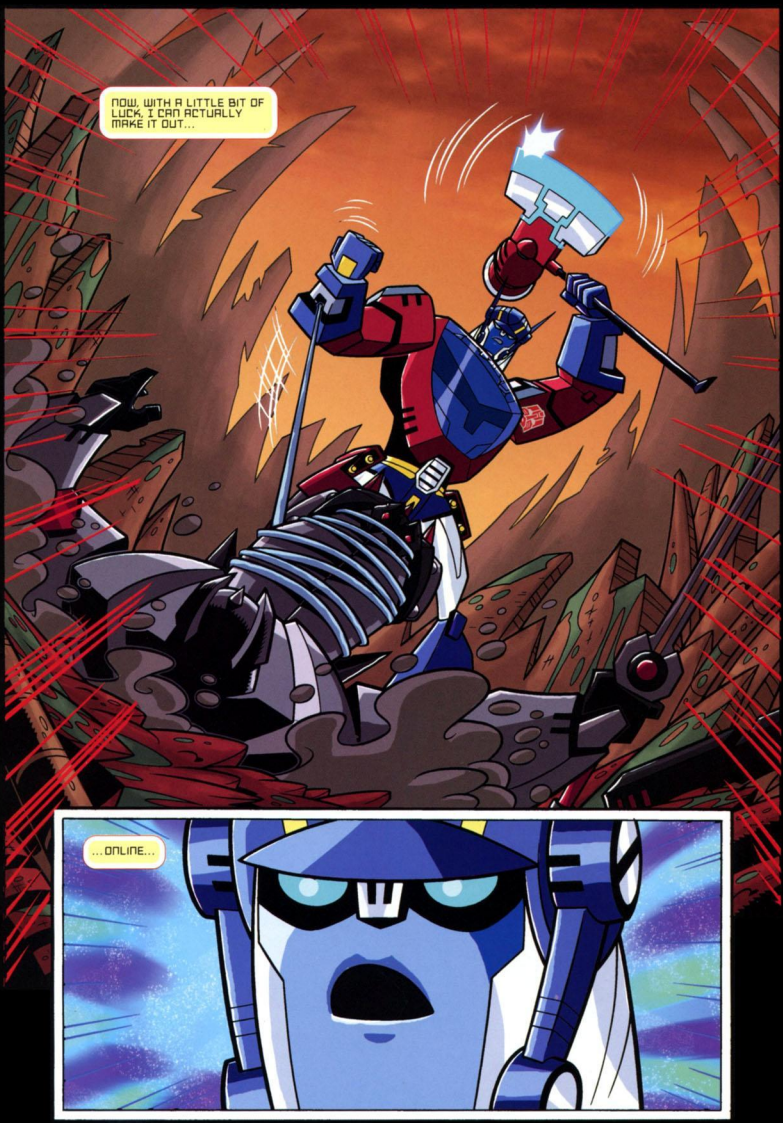
AND NOT JUST ANY DECEPTICON...
...BUT THE LEADER OF THEM ALL!

OKAY. DON'T PANIC. JUST BECAUSE MEGATRON IS BIGGER, BETTER ARMED, AND HAS ABOUT FIVE MILLION STELLAR CYCLES MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOU DOESN'T MEAN–
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
–ACTUALLY, PANIC IS ABOUT THE ONLY LOGICAL RESPONSE HERE.
SO I'LL JUST HAVE TO DO SOMETHING /L-LOGICAL!
SLAM

OKAY, THAT BOUGHT ME A CYCLE OR TWO.
FWZZZZZZ
MAYBE LESS.
THINK, OPTIMUS, THINK.

OR BETTER STILL, DON'T THINK. TRANSFORM!
WHRR-TSCHZZ-TSCHZZ-TSCHZZ-CHK!
CLANK

THAT'S IT... KEEP HIM GUESSING...
FWSSSSHH
...KEEP HIM OFF BALANCE...
...AND, MOST OF ALL, KEEP HIM *DISARMED*!
SHLINK


NOW, WITH A LITTLE BIT OF LUCK, I CAN ACTUALLY MAKE IT OUT...
...ONLINE...

"OPTIMUS? YOU OKAY?"

OF COURSE HE'S OKAY, ELITA. IT'S JUST *SIMULATED* COMBAT!

AND, AS USUAL, YOU GOT YOUR SKIDPLATE HANDED TO YOU, BUDDY.

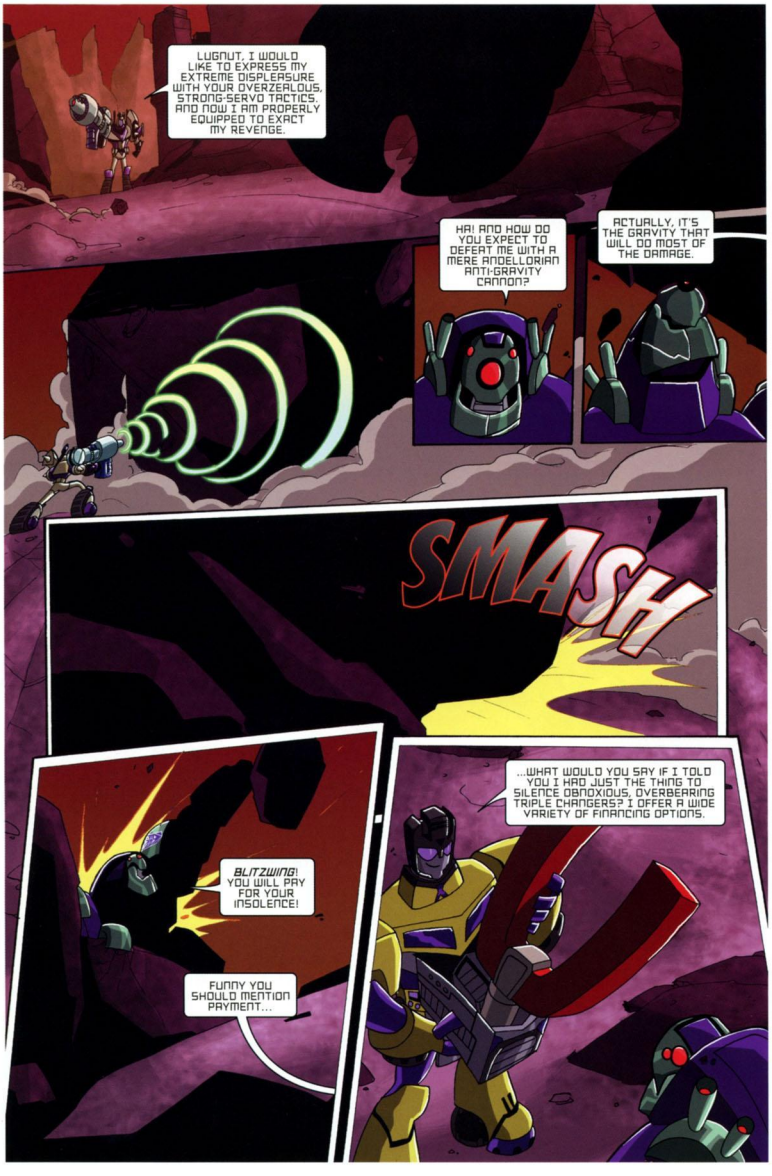
I WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO CRITICIZE, CADET SENTINEL!

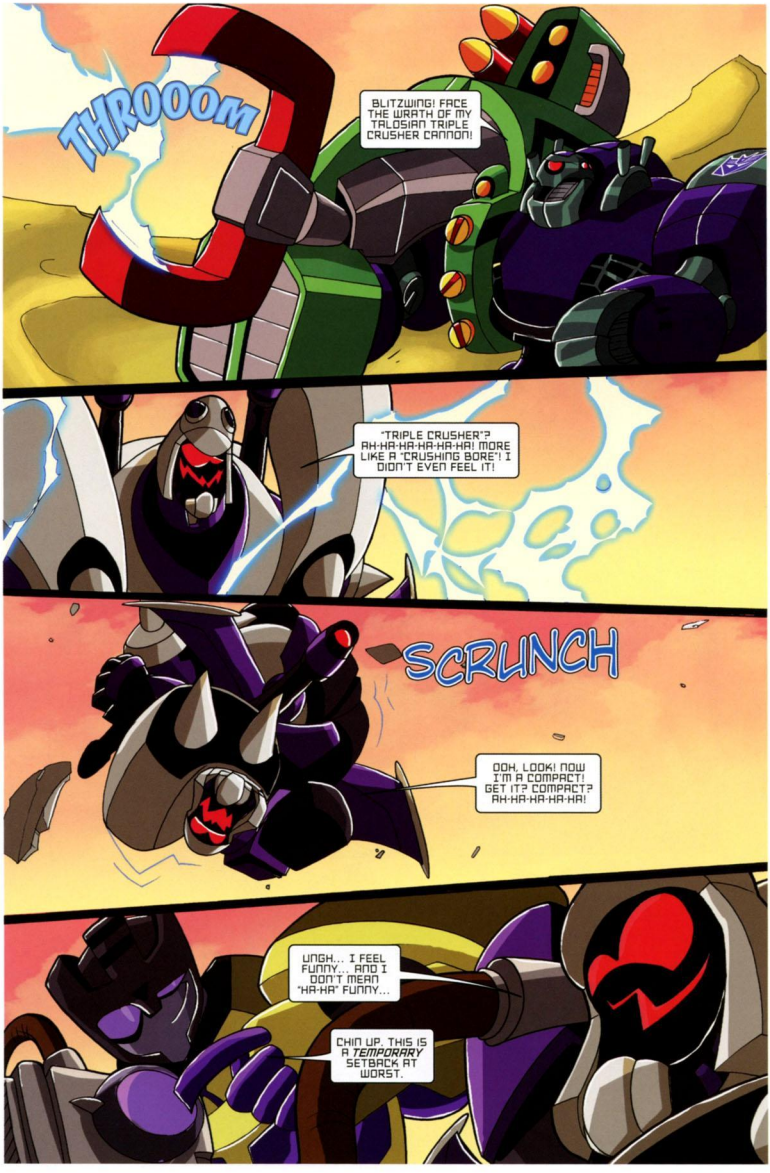
CADET OPTIMUS JUST SCORED HIGHER THAN ANY AUTOBOT IN ACADEMY HISTORY ON THE COMBAT SIMULATOR.

I EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM YOU, YOUNG 'BOT.
END.

GALACTIC RIM: DECEPTICON REFUGEE COLONY "NEW KAON."
YOU HAVE OPTIMUS PRIME?! HAND HIM OVER AT ONCE! THAT AUTOBOT WILL PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO OUR LEADER!
YEAH, SPEAKING OF PAYMENT, I'M GONNA NEED MINE FIRST.
EVERYTHING MUST GO
PATIENCE, MY BOUNTY HUNTING FRIEND. YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED WITH YOUR UPGRADES. PROVIDED I AM NOT DISAPPOINTED WITH YOUR RESULTS.
OH! I WANNA SEE HIM TURN INTO A FIRETRUCK! CAN I? CAN I? HUH? HUH? CAN I? AH-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
BLITZWING! YOU DARE TO MAKE DEALS WITH BOUNTY HUNTERS?!

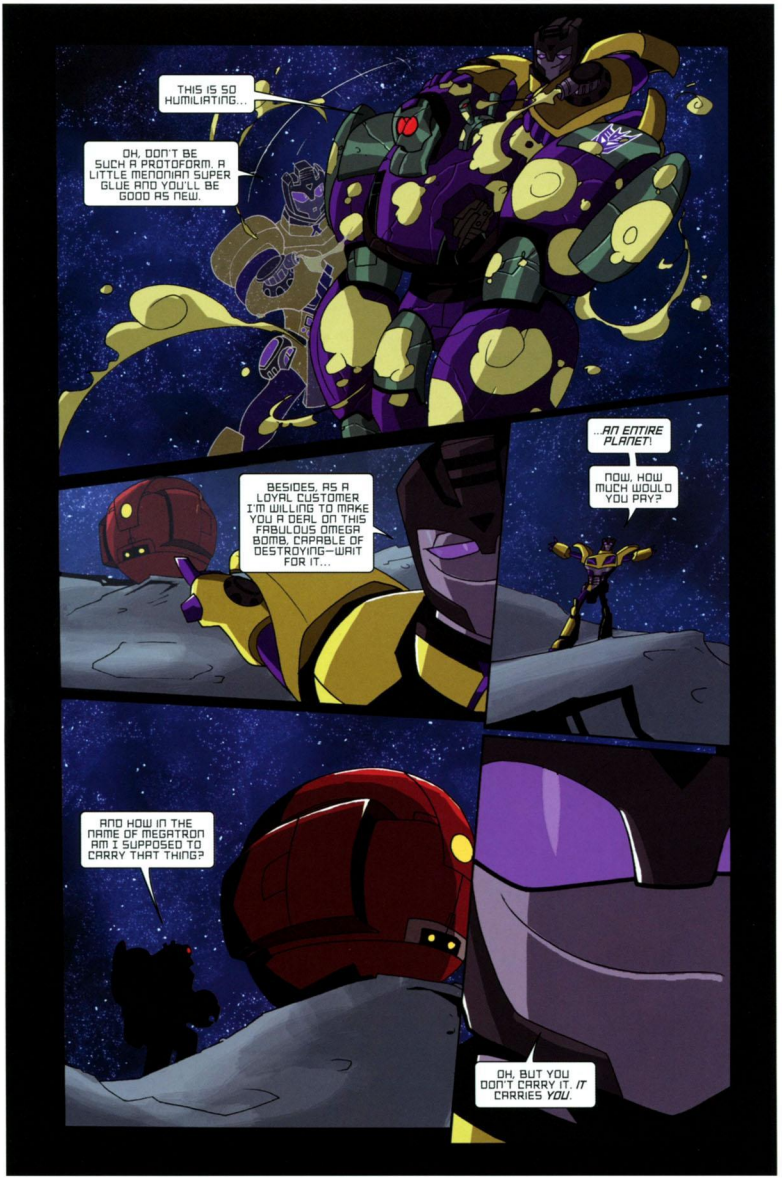
BACK OFF, LUGNUT! I ONLY WANT REVENGE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF MEGATRON!
INFIDEL! MEGATRON IS NOT DESTROYED! MEGATRON LIVES!
WHOOSH
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY INTERRUPTING, BUT YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE A BIT OF A PICK-ME-UP.
UNGH...
HE'S NO FRIEND OF MINE! I WILL GRIND HIM INTO TINY, LITTLE BALL BEARINGS!
SWINDLE'S THE NAME. AND I COULDN'T HELP NOTICING YOU'RE SEVERELY OUTGUNNED BY YOUR FRIEND OVER THERE.
OF COURSE I MAKE IT A POINT NEVER TO MEDDLE IN PRIVATE AFFAIRS. BUT I MAY JUST HAVE A LITTLE SOMETHING HERE THAT MIGHT HELP YOU OUT. ASSUMING, NATURALLY, YOU HAVE THE CREDIT DOWNLOADS AVAILABLE...

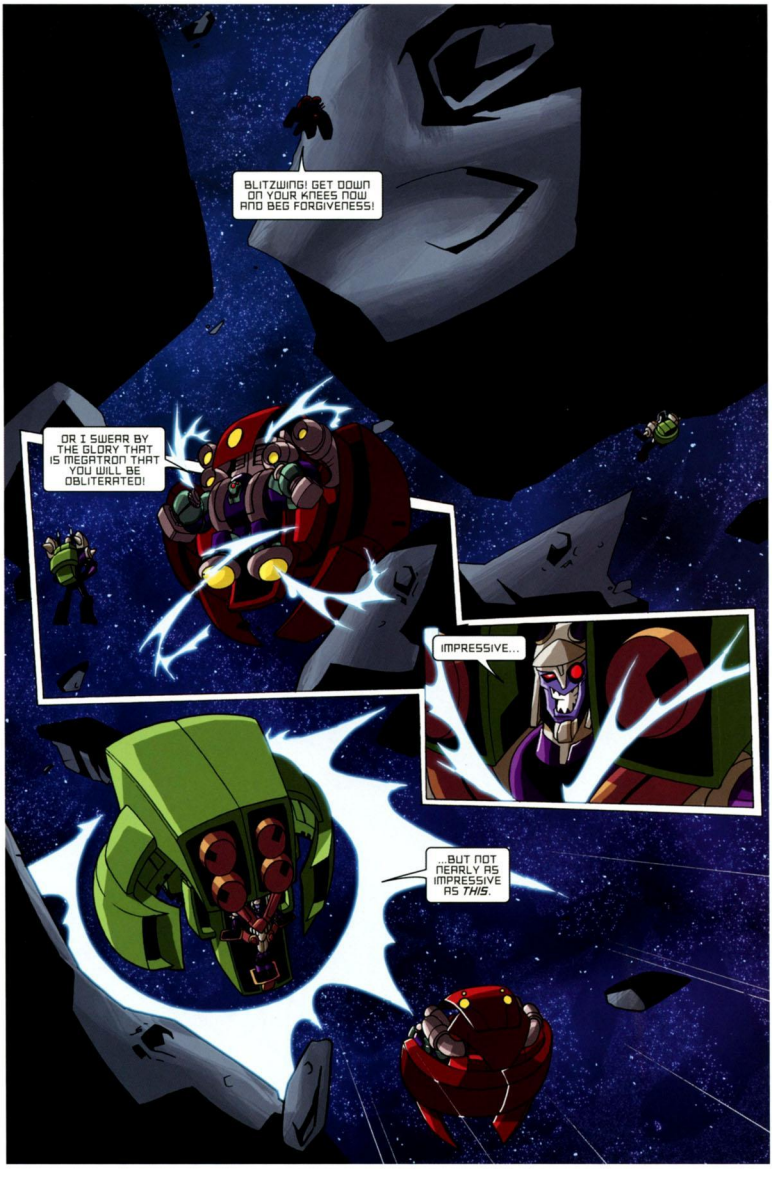

LUGNUT, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY EXTREME DISPLEASURE WITH YOUR OVERZEALOUS, STRONG-SERVO TACTICS. AND NOW I AM PROPERLY EQUIPPED TO EXACT MY REVENGE.
HA! AND HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO DEFEAT ME WITH A MERE ANDELLORIAN ANTI-GRAVITY CANNON?
ACTUALLY, IT'S THE GRAVITY THAT WILL DO MOST OF THE DAMAGE.
SMASH
BLITZWING! YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR INSOLENCE!
FUNNY YOU SHOULD MENTION PAYMENT...
...WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU I HAD JUST THE THING TO SILENCE OBNOXIOUS, OVERBEARING TRIPLE CHANGERS? I OFFER A WIDE VARIETY OF FINANCING OPTIONS.


THROOOM
BLITZWING! FACE THE WRATH OF MY TALOSIAN TRIPLE CRUSHER CANNON!
"TRIPLE CRUSHER"? AH-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA! MORE LIKE A "CRUSHING BORE"! I DIDN'T EVEN FEEL IT!
SCRUNCH
OOH, LOOK! NOW I'M A COMPACT! GET IT? COMPACT? AH-HA-HA-HA-HA!
UNGH... I FEEL FUNNY... AND I DON'T MEAN "HA-HA" FUNNY...
CHIN UP. THIS IS A *TEMPORARY* SETBACK AT WORST.

NOTHING THAT CAN'T BE OVERCOME WITH A TORKULONIAN DECOMPRESSION PUMP.
POP
FUNNY... I STILL FEEL LIGHT-HEADED. AH-HA-HA-HA-HA!
POIT
AH! MUCH BETTER!
NOW, AT NO EXTRA CHARGE, I'M WILLING TO THROW IN THESE LITTLE ITEMS I PICKED UP IN A LITTLE EXCURSION TO THE PLANET DAHROS.
BY THE WAY, IF YOU SHOULD EVER FIND YOURSELF ON DAHROS, TRUST ME, YOU DO NOT WANT TO VISIT THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE. THE LOCALS ARE SURLY, THE SERVICE IS LOUSY, AND THE ENERGON IS ALWAYS WATERED DOWN.

LUGNUT, YOU OVERGROWN OAF! I WILL SHATTER YOU INTO SLAG DUST!
FOOL! YOU EXPECT TO SHATTER ME WITH A CLOUD OF GAS?
"THE GAS IS ONLY STEP ONE."
THIS IS STEP TWO.
SMASH


THIS IS SO HUMILIATING...
OH, DON'T BE SUCH A PROTOFORM. A LITTLE MENDINAN SUPER GLUE AND YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW.
BESIDES, AS A LOYAL CUSTOMER I'M WILLING TO MAKE YOU A DEAL ON THIS FABULOUS OMEGA BOMB, CAPABLE OF DESTROYING—WAIT FOR IT...
...AN ENTIRE PLANET!
NOW, HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY?
AND HOW IN THE NAME OF MEGATRON AM I SUPPOSED TO CARRY THAT THING?
OH, BUT YOU DON'T CARRY IT. IT CARRIES YOU.


BLITZWING! GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES NOW AND BEG FORGIVENESS!
OR I SWEAR BY THE GLORY THAT IS MEGATRON THAT YOU WILL BE OBLITERATED!
IMPRESSIVE...
...BUT NOT NEARLY AS IMPRESSIVE AS *THIS*.

YOU WOULDN'T DARE!
TRY ME.
BA-DOOM
BA-BA-DOOOOM

FOOL! YOUR DOOMSDAY WEAPON IS USELESS AGAINST MY NEMESIS SHIELD!
SWINDLE?
YOU TOO?

SORRY, FOLKS. NO REFUNDS ON DAMAGED GOODS.
OH, WE'RE NOT LOOKING FOR A REFUND.
JUST AN EXCHANGE.
AS IN "EXCHANGE" YOUR HEAD FOR YOUR EXHAUST PORT! YOUR SERVO FOR YOUR PELVIS! YOUR SHOCK ABSORBERS FOR YOUR HYDRAULICS!
SMACK
CRUSH
RIP
HURT
HIT
GOUGE
MANGLE
AFTER ALL, THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT...
...OR IS IT LEFT? I'M A LITTLE MIXED UP RIGHT NOW.
HAS ANYONE SEEN MY CYBER-SPLEEN?
END.

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